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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1278  
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RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 8944  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 2203  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3014  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2220  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0098  
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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 9234  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 3421  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 5356  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 6910  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 001540

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Ha'aretz reported that Israel has agreed that members of the Presidential Guard of Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas will hold extensive training in areas near Jericho, in the Jordan Valley. YNET (Yediot Aharonot's website) and Ha'aretz cited

Major-General Keith Dayton, the US security coordinator to the P.A., as saying to the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs that Abbas's American-trained Presidential Guard had successfully fended off Hamas' recent attacks.

Maariv reported that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is getting closer to opening negotiations with Syrian President Bashar Assad. According to sources who are close to the PM, Olmert believes that peace with Syria can change dramatically the strategic situation in the region. The paper notes that the PM has the support of the IDF Chief of Staff, his deputy, the head of the intelligence branch and others. According to the paper, Israel has approached the US and the Americans are convinced that such an action could assist their interests in the Middle East.

All media cited a International Atomic Energy Agency report that said Tehran has not only ignored a Security Council deadline to stop uranium enrichment, but has actually expanded it, starting up more than 1,300 centrifuges. Yediot cited American TV channel CBS as reporting that the US plans to destroy the Iranian nuclear devices or at least disrupt uranium enrichment.

Leading media reported that PA President Mahmoud Abbas met Wednesday afternoon with Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and representatives of the different factions to discuss the need to reach a truce with Israel and boost the internal ceasefire. According to reports, the meeting ended without an agreement.

Leading Internet websites reported this morning that the IDF arrested 32 senior Hamas officials, including legislators, mayors, and one cabinet minister, Education Minister Nasser Shaer. Leading media reported that Lebanon has turned to the US and requested emergency aid in order to assist it in its fight against the Fatah il-Islam terror organization in northern Lebanon.

All media reported that Amnesty International published its annual report on Tuesday, according to which Israeli forces committed "war crimes" and other "serious violations of international humanitarian law" in their 34-day war against Hizbullah last summer. The human rights group also accused soldiers and settlers of committing "serious human rights abuses, including unlawful killings, against Palestinians, mostly with impunity." Israel Radio this morning cited IDF officials as saying that they are studying the report and will give their reaction soon.

The media reported that 13 Qassam rockets were launched into Israel during the 2 day holiday, with no casualties reported. Israel Radio reported that three more Qassam rockets were fired this morning. According to Ha'aretz, despite the sharp decline in the number of Qassam rackets fired from the Gaza Strip in the past two days, defense officials have recommended that Israel maintain military pressure on Hamas.

All media reported that 1000 Sderot residents will be evacutaed to a "tent city" being built by Arcadi Gaydamak in Hayarkon Park in Tel Aviv. The "tent city" is being built despite the objection of the PM office.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the European Union have agreed to extend the mandate of the EU's Border Assistance Mission (BAM) at the Rafah Crossing.

Leading media reported that last night the IDF attacked offices and businesses in Gaza that are suspected of serving as conduits for transferring funds from Iran, Syria, and Lebanon to terror organizations in the Gaza Strip, principally to Hamas.

Yediot reported that PM Olmert will be summoned once again to testify before the Winograd Committee.

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Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "In lieu of military or political solutions and lacking a ruling party with

which to negotiate, it seems the only chance to halt the deterioration we are witnessing is the effort to curb the smuggling of arms into Gaza. Whether this is achieved by the Israel Defense Forces or with the help of other countries, the arms-flow must be contained as the driving force behind the conflagration."

Columnist Akiva Eldar wrote in Ha'aretz: "Sooner or later, whether through gun slits or the slits of ballot boxes, the Palestinians will receive another opportunity to choose which path they prefer. The Israelis will, too."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "On May 21, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that Palestinian rocket attacks against Israel are 'completely unacceptable and violate international law.' We cannot expect the world to come to our side if we do not demand that specific actions be taken to back such words and aid a nation under attack."

Op-ed columnist Yael Paz-Melamed opined in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "It's time to stop the raging populism that is enveloping Sderot residents from all directions. It's time to tell them the truth, difficult and painful and intolerable as it may be.... Only if Sderot residents know exactly what they face is there a chance they will hang on and organize as they should. It will be hell for each and every one of them, but at least they won't expect paradise."

Former Justice Minister Yosef (Tommy) Lapid opined in Maariv: "What would the Americans do were the Mexicans to fire rockets on San Antonio?.... Would they also be prepared to take quietly what the residents of Sderot have had to take on a daily basis? ... Or would they bomb and shell and destroy and kill until the Mexicans ... stopped shooting and begged for a bit of peace and quiet? Is there any doubt about that?.... In order for the Palestinian population to rise up against the people firing Kassam rockets we are going to have to respond to every Kassam rocket with massive bombing at the 'sources of fire.'"

Block Quotes:

#### I. "Unreasonable proposal"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (05/24): "In lieu of military or political solutions and lacking a ruling party with which to negotiate, it seems the only chance to halt the deterioration we are witnessing is the effort to curb the smuggling of arms into Gaza. Whether this is achieved by the Israel Defense Forces or with the help of other countries, the arms-flow must be contained as the driving force behind the conflagration. A temporary cease-fire will provide Palestinian militants with time to amass weapons and develop longer-range ballistic capabilities, which would constitute a veritable threat to Israel. Israel has no reason to comply with such claims, even if they are expressed by the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and even if they stem from good intentions.... For years, the Israeli left advocated helping to consolidate the moderate Palestinian forces, which have meanwhile lost what remained of their former strength. The penury inhabitants of Gaza are suffering offers a rich nursery for various armed militant factions, whose hatred of Israel and the constant war against it constitute their sole raison d'etre and the only purpose of life. And in that respect, any military action against Gaza will vicariously serve to harm Israel."

#### II. "The End of A Path"

Columnist Akiva Eldar wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (05/24): "To embark on a new path, Israel must take a big step forward, along the route charted by the Arab League's peace initiative. Opening a channel to Damascus, whether secret or explicit, via which Israel would assure Syria that an accord on the Golan would not lag behind an agreement on the Palestinian territories, would not just calm the northern front; Khaled Meshal's host could also exert more long-term influence on the southern front than a few Israeli air attacks on Gaza weapons laboratories. Hamas' violent clashes with Fatah in the streets of Gaza are nothing more than a dress rehearsal for the great confrontation the group anticipates in June and July. The attempt to blend a religious

movement (whose ideology does not allow it to recognize a Jewish state) and a secular national movement (which has internalized the limits of its power) did not succeed. Sooner or later, whether through gun slits or the slits of ballot boxes, the Palestinians will receive another opportunity to choose which path they prefer. The Israelis will, too."

### III. "Iran and Gaza"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (05/24): " Hamas thinks it can escalate its way to a range of achievements. It already sees Israelis fleeing and attempting to protect themselves from its rockets, and our prime minister saying that there are 'no simple solutions' to the problem. It sees that countries like Japan and Norway have not rescinded their announced desire to aid the Hamas government directly, that international aid to the Palestinians still stands at record highs since Hamas's election, and that Fatah -- though some of its leaders call for ending the Kassam attacks -- remains inside the Hamas-led 'unity government.' .... There is much that Israel should be urging the international community to do, both to raise the pressure against Hamas directly and on Iran for actively working to spark a new regional conflagration. On May 21, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that Palestinian rocket attacks against Israel are 'completely unacceptable and violate international law.' We cannot expect the world to come to our side if we do not demand that specific actions be taken to back such words and aid a nation under attack."

### IV. "Enough Populism"

Op-ed columnist Yael Paz-Melamed opined in the popular, pluralist Maariv (05/24): "Someone here has gone crazy, and it's not us, the public. It's time to stop the raging populism that is enveloping Sderot residents from all directions. It's time to tell them the truth, difficult and painful and intolerable as it may be. It is impossible to protect completely a city of 23,000 residents within a reasonable time. And the even harder truth is that right now, as well as in the foreseeable future, there is no military solution to the Kassam rocket fire. If there were, the IDF would have found it, and since there are no diplomatic talks going on now, there will also be no diplomatic solution. So what do we have? We have interim solutions, small consolations. Such as spending hundreds of millions of shekels to fortify what can be fortified. Or massive economic aid to the residents so that they are somewhat able to survive this period, and strengthening the entire mental support system for the residents, and taking them, in an orderly way, for various rests. Only if Sderot residents know exactly what they face is there a chance that they will hang on and organize as they should. It will be hell for each and every one of them, but at least they won't expect paradise."

### IV. "No Choice But to Use a Heavy Hand"

Former Justice Minister Yosef (Tommy) Lapid opined in the popular, pluralist Maariv (05/24): "What would the Americans do were the Mexicans to fire rockets on San Antonio? What would the Russians do were the Ukrainians to fire rockets on Moscow? ... Would they also be prepared to take quietly what the residents of Sderot have had to take on a daily basis? ... Or would they bomb and shell and destroy and kill until the Mexicans, or the Ukrainians, stopped shooting and begged for a bit of peace and quiet? Is there any doubt about that?.... In order for the Palestinian population to rise up against the people firing Kassam rockets we are going to have to respond to every Kassam rocket with massive bombing at the 'sources of fire.' It is true that this course of action will cause damage, suffering and death among the civilian population. It is true that it runs against the grain of our humane sentiments. It is true that the television footage out of Gaza will raise an outcry in public opinion throughout the world against us. It is true that the UN and the other powers will apply heavy pressure on us. All of those troubles put together do not outweigh the fact that a country ceases to be sovereign when it allows its neighbor to bomb it.... If there were even the smallest chance that this enormous restraint would bring peace any closer I might think differently. But the fact that we regard with such indulgence attacks on our population in the northern Negev does not bring peace any closer; it pushes it farther away. Because it signals to the Palestinians that it is possible to attack us and ultimately to defeat us one step at a time.... He who

refrains today from using a heavy hand will need a far heavier hand  
in the future."  
JONES